

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (canceled)
2. (currently amended) An apparatus, for accessing sets of information stored in an information system by a plurality of users and accessible by means of a communications network, the apparatus comprising:
 - i) an input for receiving a set of information selected by a first user;
 - ii) data storage for storing a plurality of user profiles, each of said plurality of user profiles associated with one of a plurality of users, and each of said plurality of user profiles comprising at least one predetermined keyword;
 - iii) a document generating tool for generating a document based on the information selected by the first user, and for storing the generating document in a data store;
 - iv) a meta-data generator arranged to automatically generate at least one set of meta-information from the set of information selected by the first user received at the input, generated document and to store said at least one set of meta-information in said data store, said at least one set of generated meta-information being stored in accessible data storage, comprising information describing the generated document and a link to a location of the generated document in the data store;
 - ~~iv)~~v) a comparator for comparing at least one of said plurality of user profiles with said at least one set of generated meta-information and for identifying, in

dependence upon the results of said comparison, a second user having a profile similar to said at least one set of generated meta-information; and

vi) a processor arranged to automatically address an alert message to said first user comprising the identity of said second user identified by said comparator.

3. (previously presented) An apparatus according to Claim 2, wherein said comparator is operable to compare a user profile associated with said first user with at least one further user profile of said plurality of user profiles and thereby to identify a user having a similar user profile to that of said first user.

4. (previously presented) An apparatus according to Claim 2, including a processor arranged to enable said first user to select one or more of said plurality of users and to generate an alert message for sending to said one or more selected users.

5. (currently amended) An apparatus according to Claim 2, wherein, in use, said stored ~~sets of information~~ documents conform to a first predetermined format and wherein said apparatus includes a converter to enable a set of information received at the input in a format other than said first predetermined format to be converted into said first predetermined format and stored in said data ~~storage~~ store.

6. (previously presented) An apparatus according to Claim 2, including a processor arranged to monitor the plurality of user profiles and to detect a

change to the user profile of said first user and to automatically cause said comparator to compare the changed user profile with other user profiles stored in said data storage and thereby to identify a user having a similar user profile to the changed profile of said first user.

7. (previously presented) An apparatus according to Claim 2, including a processor arranged to monitor the plurality of user profiles to detect a change to the user profile of said first user and to automatically cause said comparator to compare the changed user profile with meta-information stored in said data storage and thereby to alert said first user to a stored information set matching the changed profile.

8. (currently amended) An information access system comprising a plurality of software agents, each agent comprising elements providing:

- i) an input for receiving a set of information selected by a first user;
- ii) data storage access for storing a plurality of user profiles, each of said plurality of user profiles associated with one of a plurality of users, and each of said plurality of user profiles comprising at least one predetermined keyword;
- iii) a document generating tool for generating a document based on the information selected by the first user, and for storing the generating document in a data store;
- iv) a meta-data generator, arranged to automatically generate at least one set of meta-information from the set of information selected by the first user received at the input, generated document and to store said at least one set of generated meta-information

in said data store, said at least one set of meta-information generated being stored in accessible data storage; comprising information describing the generated document and a link to the location of the generated document in the data store;

~~iv)~~v) a comparator for comparing at least one of said plurality of user profiles with said at least one set of meta-information and for identifying, in dependence upon the results of said comparison, a second user having a profile similar to said at least one set of meta-information; and

~~v)~~vi) a processor arranged to automatically address an alert message to said first user comprising the identity of said second user identified by said comparator.

9. (currently amended) A method of monitoring stored information sets accessible using a communications network, for the purpose of alerting a first user to the existence of a second user having a shared interest in an information set selected by said first user, the method comprising the steps of:

i) storing a user profile associated with each user, said user profile comprises at least one predetermined keyword and an identifier for the user;

ii) receiving a set of information selected by said first user;

iii) generating a document based on the information selected by the first user, and storing the document in a data store;

iv) generating a set of meta-information dependent on ~~said received set of information;~~ the generated document and storing said set of meta-information in said data store, said set of generated meta-information comprising information describing the

generated document and a link to the location of the generated document in the data store;

iii) v) comparing the generated set of meta-information with a stored user profile other than that for said first user and, in dependence upon the result from the comparison, identifying a second user having a user profile similar to said meta-information; and

iv) vi) transmitting an alert message addressed to the first user comprising at least the identity of said second user, wherein following said step of generating a set of meta-information dependent on said received information set, said step of comparing the generated set of meta-information and said step of transmitting an alert message occur automatically.

10. (previously presented) The method as in claim 9 further comprising comparing a user profile associated with the first user with at least one further user profile to identify a user having a similar user profile to that of the first user.

11. (previously presented) The method as in claim 9, wherein when the set of meta-information is generated, comparing said at least one set of meta-information with user profiles associated with each of the other plurality of users is automatically activated, and in dependence upon the result of the comparison, an alert message is automatically addressed to each of the plurality of users.

12. (previously presented) The method as in claim 9, further comprising enabling the first user to select one or more of said identified users and generate an alert message to send to one or more selected users.

13. (previously presented) The method as in claim 9, further comprising receiving the set of information in a format other than a first predetermined and converting the information into a first predetermined format.

14. (previously presented) The method as in claim 9, further comprising monitoring the user profile of the first user to detect a change to the user profile of the first user and automatically comparing the changed user profile with other stored user profiles to thereby identify a user having a similar user profile to the changed user profile of the first user.

15. (previously presented) The method as in claim 9, further comprising monitoring the user profile of the first user to detect a change to the user profile of the first user and automatically comparing the changed user profile with meta-information to thereby alert the first user that the changed user profile matches a received set of information.

16. (previously presented) The apparatus as in claim 2, wherein when said meta-data generator generates a set of meta-information on activation by said first user, said comparator is automatically activated to compare said at least one set of meta-

information with user profiles associated with each of said plurality of users, and in dependence upon the result of said comparison, to automatically address an alert message to each of said plurality of users.

17. (new) The apparatus as in claim 2, wherein the set of information selected by the first user is any type of information of any format.

18. (new) The system as in claim 8, wherein the set of information selected by the first user is any type of information of any format.

19. (new) The method as in claim 9, wherein the received set of information selected by the first user is any type of information of any format.